# إصدارات بالإنجليزية

# منشور عن التعليم في فلسطين

## (التعليم تحت الاحتلال)

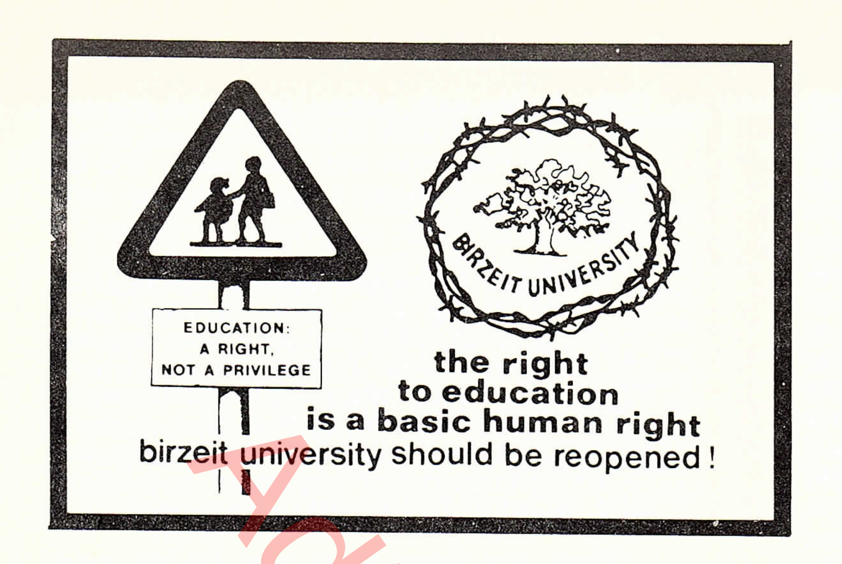
## «Education Under Occupation»

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**عدد الصفحات: 4 صفحات، ايه 4**

ورقة معلومات (بالإنجليزية) عن التعليم في فلسطين. وهو موضوع منقول عن أحد الإصدارات الفلسطينية بالإنجليزية، ولكن لم يعد من الممكن تحديد عام النشر الأصلي، ولا جهة النشر الأصلية.

> وفقا لما ورد في تقرير الهيئة الإدارية المقدم للمؤتمر السنوي الثالث، فإن الهيئة أصدرت بالإنجليزية بيانا بمناسبة زيارة الرئيس المصري أنور السادات إلى الولايات المتحدة؛ وبيانا بمناسبة إغلاق جامعة بيرزيت؛ بمناسبة تسليم الولايات المتحدة زياد أبو عين لإسرائيل.؛ وبطاقات موجهة للأمم المتحدة والخارجية الأميركية احتجاجا على تسليم زياد أبو عين؛ وبيانا بمناسبة يوم الأرض. ولكن هذه البيانات غير متوفرة لدى إدارة الأرشيف (يمكن الرجوع إلى العدد السابع من مجلة "الاتحاد" المتوفر في الأرشيف).




# EDUCATION UNDER OCCUPATION

In their struggle against foreign occupation of their homeland, the Palestinian people have had to confront successive occupiers' attempts to deny them the education they are entitled to. Israeli repression against Palestinian educational institutions in occupied Palestine in 1979 drew worldwide attention to the plight of Palestinian education, but in fact this repression is only the latest chapter in a squalid story which began during the years of the British mandate in Palestine.

## BRITISH DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PALESTINIANS

Britain seized control of Palestine after World War I in violation of wartime agreements with Arab leaders. Britain was determined to establish a "Jewish national home" in Palestine at the expense of the Palestinians who already lived there, and thus assisted Zionist immigration and colonization efforts. Palestinian Arabs were discriminated against in all ways by the British government as the latter showered its munificence on its Zionist proteges. Arab education was not exempt from this discrimination. Up to 80 per cent of the large network of schools and technical and agricultural institutes established by the Zionist organization for Jews only were financed by the mandatory government. But the public education provided for the Arab inhabitants of Palestine was "on [a] primitive level," according to a Zionist economic study published in 1946 (R. Nathan, O. Gass and D. Greamer, *Palestine: Problem and Promise*). In the 850 Arab villages and towns of Palestine there were in 1941/2 only 404 Arab public schools and only 20-25 per cent of the 5 to 15 year old Arab children could attend school. This was at a time when 90 per cent of Jewish children of the same age group were in school.

The mandatory government's Director of Education reported that in Arab public schools, "classes are generally so crowded as to 'disorganize' teaching and to constitute a menace to health. The training of teachers is on so miserably inadequate a scale as to lay no basis for future progress. Moreover, there is no real scholarship system to enable gifted children of Arab parents to cultivate their talents."

The Jewish population of less than half a million had 62,000 children in Jewish community schools with 2,827 teachers in 1941. In the same year the Arab population of over a million had only 56,600 pupils in public schools with 1,465 teachers. Thus Arab children had only one teacher for 38.8 pupils while Jewish children had one teacher for every 22.2 pupils. The British and the Zionists saw to it that the educational system was strictly segregated, and Arab public school buildings and equipment were of a much lower standard than Jewish school buildings and equipment.

## THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF 1948

In May 1948 the British left Palestine, having acted as midwives for the newly-born Zionist "State of Israel." In a series of brutal military campaigns in 1948 the Zionist forces seized the greater part of Palestine and expelled some 840,000 Palestinians from their homes. These took refuge in those parts of Palestine which remained outside of Zionist control (the West Bank and Gaza Strip) and in neighboring Arab countries. Only 130,000 Palestinians remained within the "State of Israel," and they were subject to an uncompromising military government which preserved the apartheid-like educational system of the mandatory era.

In 1949 the Israeli government adopted free and compulsory elementary education for all children, Jews and non-Jews, and Palestinian Arab schools became official schools. A special branch of the Ministry of Education, headed by a Jewish director, was set up to see to it that official programs were implemented in Arab schools, public and private. This segregated school system has survived until today. The proportion of Arab children attending elementary schools increased to 66 per cent in 1963/4 and 75 per cent in 1970/71, but this improvement was due mainly to the extensive network

of private confessional and missionary Arab schools. These Arab private schools – in contrast to Jewish private schools – receive but little assistance from the Ministry of Education.

The standard of Arab education is at all levels highly unsatisfactory – below that of Jewish education, below that of other Arab states, even below that in Palestine under the mandate. School buildings, equipment, suitable textbooks in Arabic, qualified teachers, libraries and reading rooms are all lacking. In 1966/7 for example, half the teachers in Arab elementary schools were not qualified. One reason for this state of affairs is that teachers in Arab schools are appointed less for their qualifications and ability than for the acceptability of their political views to the government. Moreover, while Jewish teachers enjoy rights of tenure, the Arab teacher remains in a constant state of insecurity: he or she may be discharged at the slightest sign of opposition to the denigration, distortion and neglect of Arab history and culture that passes for education in offical school programs in Arab schools.

The low level of elementary education has meant that secondary school standards have also declined as the high rate of failure of Arab pupils in the secondary school certificate examination shows. The total number of Arab holders of General Secondary School Certificates for the period 1954/5 to 1970/1 was 1,903 compared to 105,868 Jewish holders of these certificates. Although constituting about 11 per cent of the "State of Israel's" population, Arabs make up only one per cent of the country's secondary school graduates.

Only 171 Arabs received university education in Israel in 1963/4 and 607 in 1971. Arabs now constitute about two per cent of university students. Technical and vocational training for Arabs in Israel is also minimal.

## THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF 1967

By its aggression of June 1967 Zionist Israel brought the rest of Palestine under its control, plus parts of Syria and Egypt. Palestinian students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, too, began to feel the heavy hand of the Israeli military occupation.

In Arab East Jerusalem Israel replaced the Jordanian curriculum with the Israeli one. This step drew Jerusalem students away from the Arabic curriculum and prevented them from enrolling in Arab universities. Although other schools in the West Bank continued to teach the Jordanian curriculum, Israel changed syllabuses and censored and altered textbooks, especially those dealing with history and social sciences. The study of Jewish history was made obligatory while Palestinian and Arab history and the Palestinian and Arab cultural heritage were deliberately ignored.

The Israeli authorities banned the use of 55 textbooks in the West Bank including three Islamic religious books and 22 Arabic language and literature books. Punishment for defying this order was set at one year's imprisonment or a fine of IL2500 or both. West Bank students and teachers demonstrated against this ban and for a time stopped attending school. In the Gaza Strip, 70 out of 78 textbooks were banned.

These and other Israeli acts led the 18th session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 1974 to call for extensive supervision of education and culture in the territories occupied by Israel. The Conference invited "the Director-General to exercise full supervision over education and cultural interests in the occupied territories and to cooperate with the Arab states concerned to insure the population of the occupied territories their full rights of culture and education." Like so many other resolutions this one was also defied by the Israeli government.

## BIR ZEIT: A FOCUS OF ZIONIST REPRESSION

The two-month closure of Bir Zeit University in summer 1979 is the most dramatic example of how the 12-year-old Israeli occupation is disrupting the education system in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Palestinian educators are now concerned about the ability of Palestinian youth to receive a proper education in their own country.

Bir Zeit, the oldest and biggest indigenous Palestinian university, was shut down on the orders of the Israeli Military Governor on 2 May after a day of demonstrations about the shooting of a Bir Zeit student by an Israeli civilian from one of the Jewish settlements. Israeli soldiers besieged the campus near Ramallah, and hundreds of students had their identity cards confiscated indiscriminately. When they reported, as instructed, to Israeli military headquarters to collect the cards, some were beaten , and in the evening Bir Zeit was ordered shut.

On 4 June, the Israeli war Minister was questioned in the Knesset about the closure of Bir Zeit, although such action has become almost routine for many schools and colleges in the occupied areas. He said the institution was a place of "hostile political activity", a vague

phrase, (like "security reasons", the other Israeli favourite).

In the context of Israel's military occupation, however, it is sufficient reason to close schools, fine and jail students and teachers, and even, as happened recently in the West Bank, nullify the accreditation of students who enrol in private schools after they have been ordered by the occupation authorities to attend a government school far away from their home town. In another recent incident, the Israelis prevented Nablus high school graduates from going abroad for their university studies for the 1979-80 academic year.

## MORE UNIVERSITIES AND SCHOOLS CLOSED

The closing of Bir Zeit has received the most international attention, but is only one small instance of Israeli measures against Palestinian schools. For example, between February and May of 1979, the military governor of the West Bank took a number of similar actions.

He closed Bethlehem University (730 students) for four days and 50 students were arrested when an army unit entered the campus. He sent a team of senior Israeli officers to Bir Zeit University on 3 May with a search order stating, "There is reason to suspect that in the campus there are objects which are subject to seizure." Nothing was found.

He closed Bethlehem boys' secondary school (630 pupils) on 7 May, closed Ramallah boys' secondary school (500 pupils) on 11 March, closed the UNRWA women's vocational and teacher-training centre at Tireh, near Ramallah (650 students) on 12 March and closed the women's teaching-training institute in Ramallah (216 students) on 12 March. All these have remained closed.

Other schools were shut for shorter periods, like the UNRWA boys' preparatory school at Kalandia (800 pupils), which was shut down for eight weeks from 12 February, the Hisham Bin-Abdel-Malik boys' secondary school in Jericho (328 pupils), which was closed for five weeks from 5 March, and the boys' secondary school at Halhoul village (600 pupils), which was shut for four weeks from 13 March.

According to Mehdi Abdel-Hadi, Secretary-General of the two-year-old Council for Higher Education for the West Bank and Gaza, closing schools is the most direct and brutal form of Israeli interference in the education process.
But other, more subtle pressures make the task of providing education a daily struggle in the occupied areas, he told the London magazine *"The Middle East"* in an interview. There are Israeli regulations banning Arab periodicals and books from the libraries of Palestinian universities. Other regulations compel schools to pay customs duties and Israeli taxes on laboratory equipment or research material that used to be bought tax-free under Jordanian law. Others make possible the transfer of students and professors from local schools to more distant ones and prevent non-resident Palestinians or foreigners from getting work permits to teach at West Bank universities.

## RESTRICTIONS AND BEATINGS

One college dean in the West Bank, who wanted to remain anonymous for fear of Israeli reprisals, told "The Middle East": "Under the best conditions, when schools are open and students have access to the campus, the functioning of universities is still hampered and restricted.

"It is common practice for the occupation authorities to set up military checkpoints at university gates, where students entering campus have to wait for several hours to pass through. Some will be asked to stand in the sun for half the day before being allowed to enter campus. Others may be arrested, and jailed or fined, in a totally arbitrary manner.

"These daily annoyances produce an atmosphere in which the practical business of holding classes on time becomes difficult, and the calm psychological attitude that a student needs to complete university studies is also destroyed.

"If a student cannot find the books and periodicals required for proper research work, there is tension among the faculty because of uncertainty about work permits and the end of the school year sees the universities closed down so that it is impossible to hold exams and issue diplomas, what kind of educational system can the Palestinian people look forward to in their own country?"

Similar problems also face primary and secondary schools. A study of education in West Bank government schools, recently published by Fathiya Said Nasru, of Bir Zeit University's Education and Psychology Department, concludes that: "In short, teachers are working under difficult conditions, students are going through an identity crisis; they receive their education in a chaotic atmosphere — beaten, jailed or even shot to death if they express their views in any kind of protest against occupation.

| | Palestinians | Israeli Jews |
|---|---|---|
| Opportunity for education | 33% | 100% |
| Illiterates over 14 years old | 36% | 9% |
| Owns a telephone | 7% | 52% |
| Owns a car | 11.5% | 28% |
| Owns a refrigerator | 54% | 98% |
| Teachers without qualifications working in the school system | 43% | 16% |

Educational and economic differentials between Israeli Jews and Palestinians living in 1948 occupied Palestine. (Source: 1979 statistics by the Israeli "Henrietta Szold Institute" as published in the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung," November 11, 1979.)

"Curriculum is changed and distorted to create a confused state of mind in the existence of the Palestinian children. Student enrolment is impaired by a heavy loss due to attrition. Drop-outs are increasing with time, and first-graders are decreasing. The question is: where will education in the West Bank go if Israeli occupation is to stay?"

## LIBERATION A NECESSITY

Because of its fundamental antagonism to the Palestinian people, their history and their culture, Zionism will go on hindering and repressing Palestinian education for as long as it is able to do so. Thus the problem of Palestinian education can only be solved in the wider context of the struggle against Zionism and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. Once they establish their own independent state in their homeland, the Palestinian people will be able to overcome the obstacles to education put in their path by foreign occupiers through most of this century. So the liberation of Palestine will not just free a piece of land; it will also free the human potentials and resources of the Palestinian people.



*Kalandia training school near Jerusalem – shut down for eight weeks in early 1979*




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